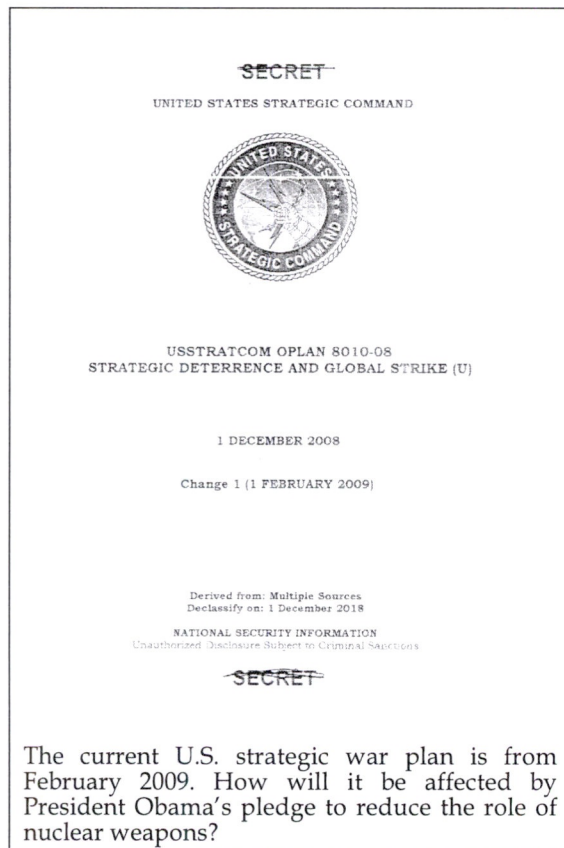


Obama and the Nuclear War Plan

Hans M. Kristensen

Director, Nuclear Information Project



One of President Barak Obama's first experiences as new president was to receive a briefing on the U.S. strategic nuclear war plan and his role as Commander in Chief to authorize the military to use it if necessary.

It must have been a sobering experience. The plan is the ultimate expression of military power; if unleashed in its full capacity, it can kill hundreds of millions of people, devastate entire nations, and cause climatic effects on a global scale.

With such apocalyptic power at the fingertip, few presidents come back from the briefing without a new sense of the awesome responsibility they have. Some accept it as inevitable, while others pledge to change it.

President Obama went to Prague and promised to the world: "To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy...." And he ordered his administration to conduct a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) that implements

that vision. Earlier this month President Obama told the Global Zero Summit in Paris that the NPR "will reduce [the] role and number of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy."¹

The Bush administration also promised to end Cold War thinking and reduce the role of nuclear weapons, but ended up advocating new weapons and missions that appeared to expand the role. How the Obama administration's nuclear policy will be different remains to be seen and how might it affect the strategic war plan?

The Strategic War Plan: OPLAN 8010

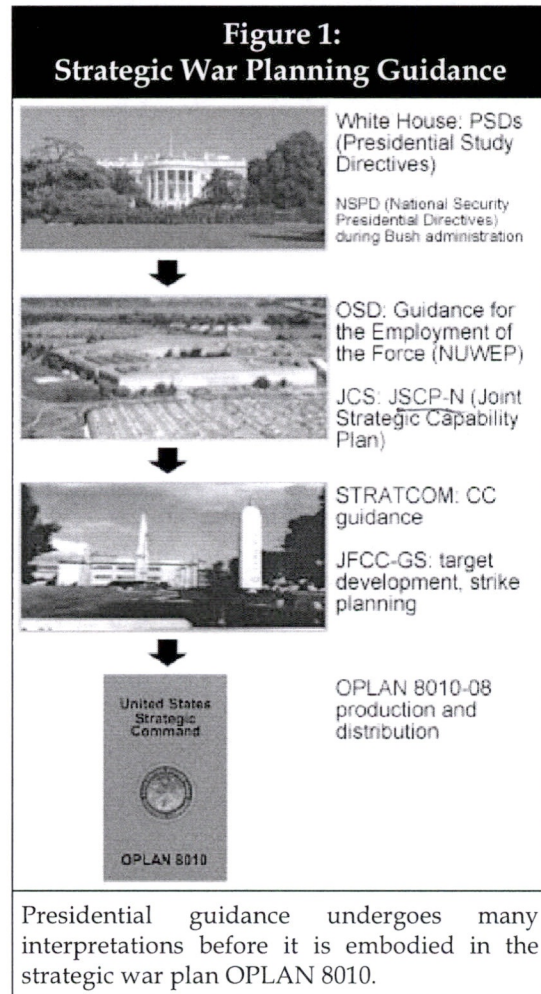
The strategic war plan is the military's interpretation of the president's nuclear guidance. The current plan is known as Operations Plan (OPLAN) 8010-08 Strategic Deterrence and Global Strike (see above). It is designed and maintained by U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) based on guidance from the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The current plan – OPLAN 8010 Change 1 from February 1, 2009 – is based on Bush administration guidance from 2001 and 2002 (NSPD-10 U.S. Strategic Nuclear Forces, December 21, 2001, and NSPD-14 [Nuclear Weapons Planning Guidance], June 28, 2002).

From the time the guidance leaves the President's desk, scores of civilian and military officials "translate" the guidance by adding nuances and interpretations that balloon the president's intentions into an array of complex strike options and weapons requirements (see Figure 1). These edits can shape the nuclear posture and the intent it conveys to potential adversaries in ways the president might not recognize or even be aware of. Former STRATCOM commander Admiral James Ellis recalls: "[The] president's direction to me was less than two pages; the Joint Staff's explanation of what the president really meant to say was twenty-six pages."²

Details of the war plan are highly classified; few in the White House or Congress have ever seen the plan. Just to get STRATCOM to reveal basic facts took some work. The plan has changed considerably since the 1980s, in response to world developments, new guidance, retirements of old weapons and deployment of new ones. In his prepared testimony to Congress last year, STRATCOM commander General Kevin Chilton called the new plan "a global deterrence plan" that represented "a significant step toward integrating deterrence activities across government agencies and with Allied partners." The plan, he said, "incorporates an interagency approach and acknowledges the need for a new understanding of the global context in which we live."³ This apparently means that the plan is drawing upon other elements of national power than offensive nuclear forces to achieve its objectives.

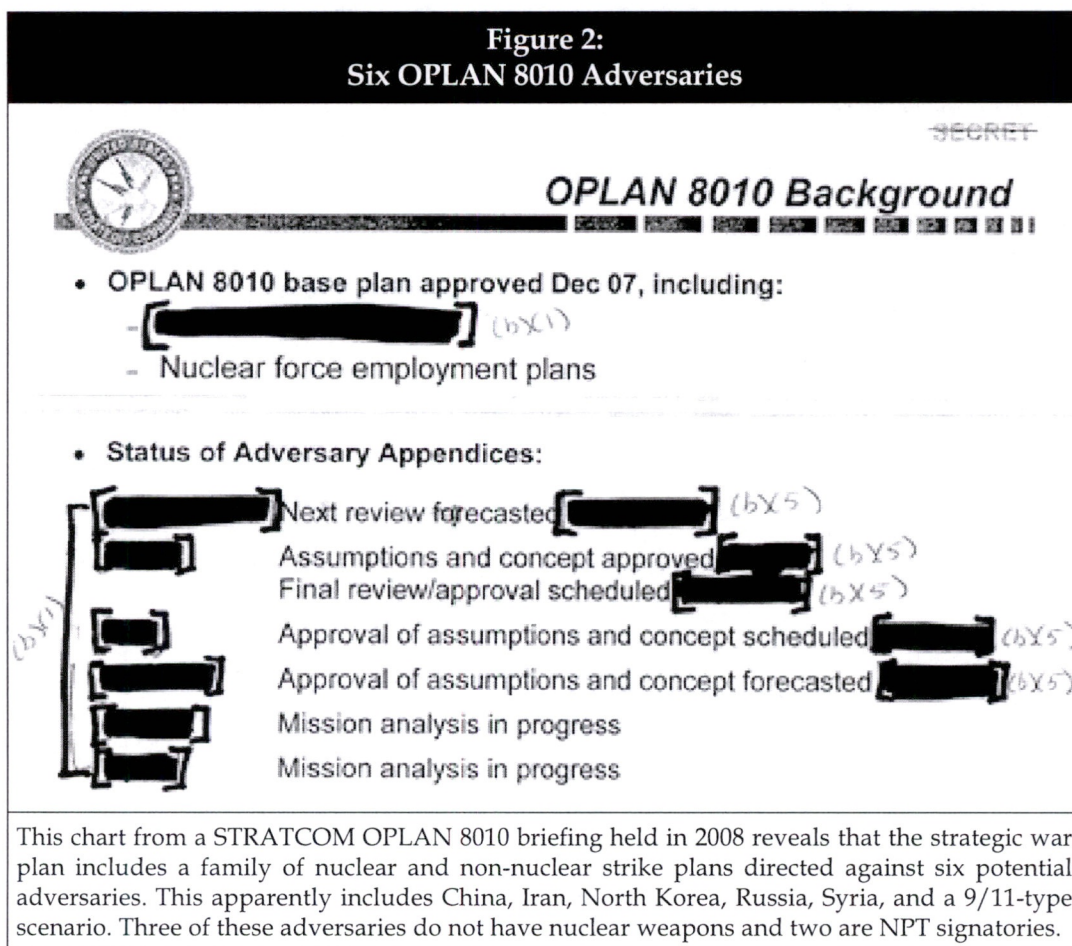
The Adversaries

OPLAN 8010 is neither a single strike plan nor focused on two nuclear adversaries (Russia and China) as during the Cold War. Instead it contains a "family of plans" directed against six



potential adversaries (see Figure 2). The names of the adversaries are secret, but they include potentially hostile countries with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (WMD). My understanding is that the list includes China, North Korea, Iran, Russia, and Syria. The sixth adversary has been a mystery, but a STRATCOM official told me: "Think 9/11." If so, it appears that the sixth adversary might refer to a catastrophic WMD attack by a terrorist organization in collaboration with a regional state.

**Figure 2:
Six OPLAN 8010 Adversaries**

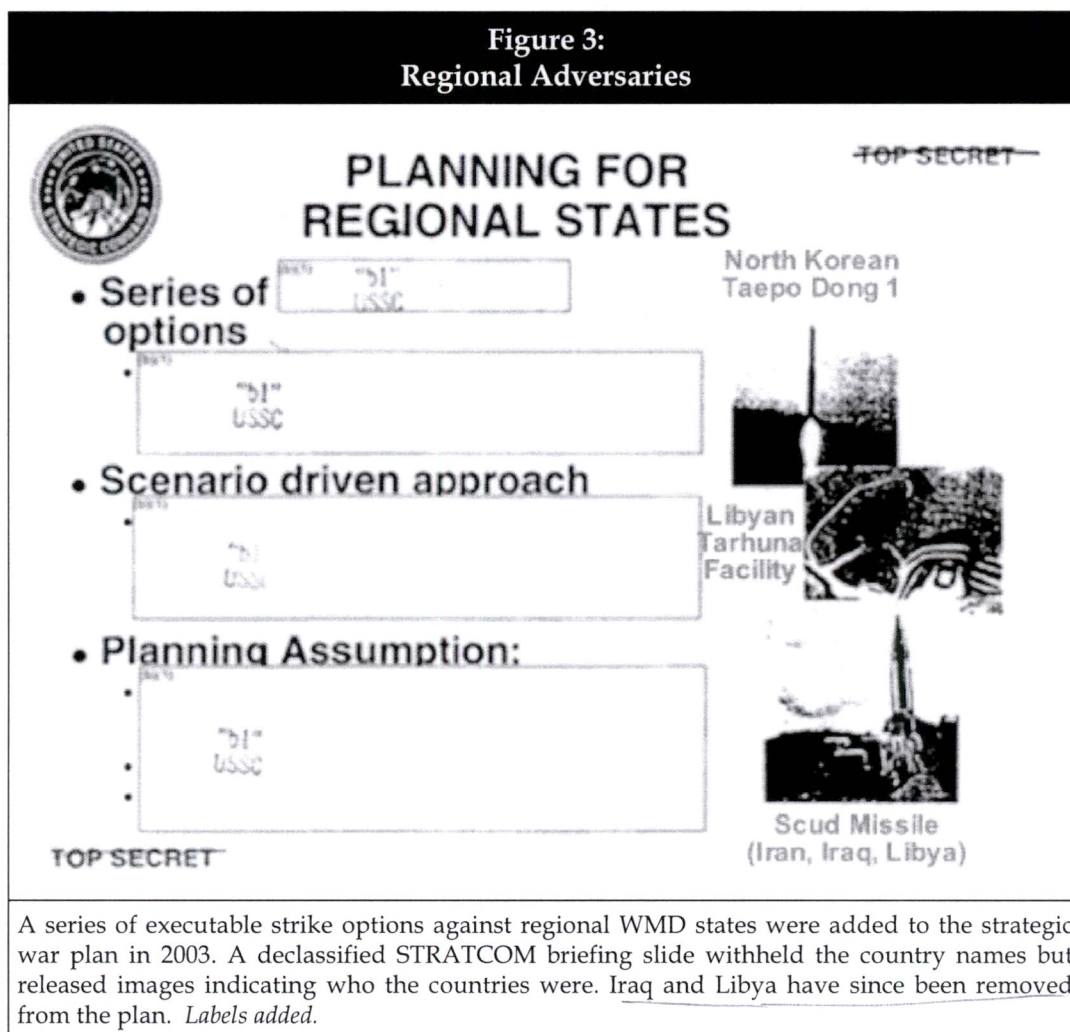


Half of the adversaries in the war plan do not have nuclear weapons and two of those are signatories to the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Planning nuclear strikes against non-nuclear NPT countries appears to contradict the so-called Negative Security Assurances according to which the United States has pledged that "it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT], except in the case of an invasion or any other attack on the United States, its territories, its armed forces or other troops, its allies or on a state toward which it has a security commitment, carried out or sustained by such a non-nuclear weapon state in association or alliance with a nuclear weapon state."⁴

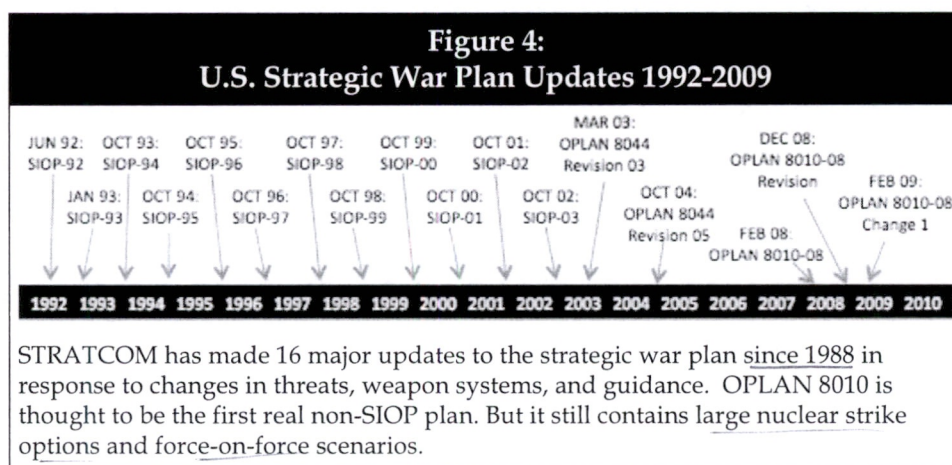
The pledge originated in 1978 when the United States sought to persuade non-nuclear countries to join the NPT and U.S. nuclear planning was focused on deterring nuclear and

large conventional attacks. The exemption “any other attack” already was a vague term, but the expansion of nuclear doctrine in the 1990s from deterring nuclear to cover all forms of WMD apparently limited the pledge even further, as illustrated by the statements made in 1996 by Clinton administration officials including Robert Bell, then Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control: “Under Protocol I [of the NPT], which we signed, each party pledges not to use or threaten nuclear weapons against an ANFZ [African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone] party. However, Protocol I will not limit options available to the United States in response to an attack by an ANFZ party using weapons of mass destruction.”⁵ The Clinton administration’s exemption was reiterated by the Bush administration in 2002 when it reaffirmed the Negative Security Assurances but then added: “We will do whatever is necessary to deter the use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States, its allies, and its interests. If a weapon of mass destruction is used against the United States or its allies, we will not rule out any specific type of military response.”⁶

**Figure 3:
Regional Adversaries**



Compared with the SIOP (Single Integrated Operational Plan) war plan of the Cold War that was focused on the Soviet Union (and China as a side-chapter), OPLAN 8010 contains “more flexible options to assure allies, and dissuade, deter, and if necessary, defeat adversaries in a wider range of contingencies.” Executable strike options against regional adversaries were added to the previous version known as OPLAN 8044 in 2003 (see Figure 3).⁷ That plan still contained remnants of the SIOP and was a “transitional step toward the New Triad and future war plans,” but OPLAN 8010 is probably the first real non-SIOP plan (although additional refinements remain). It includes conventional strike options but is overwhelmingly nuclear and not yet a real “New Triad” plan. The current plan is the 17th update to the strategic war plan since the end of the Cold War (see Figure 4).



For each adversary a range of strike options have been designed to provide the National Command Authority with responses varying in size and objectives based on the circumstances. The nuclear options consist of Emergency Response Options (ERO), Selective Attack Options (SAO), Basic Attack Options (BAO), and Directed/Adaptive Planning Capability (DPO/APO) options. The size of the options range from hundreds of warheads in preplanned options that take months to modify to a few warheads in adaptive options for crisis scenarios that can be drawn up or changed within a few hours. Not all of the plans are fully executable but apparently organized in four “levels” of which Level 4 is fully executable while lower level plans have to be worked up to be executed. Many of the warheads for the large plans are not deployed but in storage in what is known as the Responsive Force intended for redeployment if necessary. Redesigning the war plan so it doesn’t rely on operational deployment of large numbers of strategic warheads apparently was an important objective of OPLAN 8010 design, allowing the United States to go below the SORT limit of 2,200 operationally deployed strategic warheads in early 2009 nearly four years early.⁸

OPLAN 8010 also includes conventional strike options, although these are thought to be largely separate from the nuclear options within the plan. The conventional options include Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missiles deployed on four converted Ohio-class submarines, attack submarines and surface ships, and precision-guided munitions such as JDAM bombs and bunker busters on B-2 bombers. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles such as the Predator carrying Hellfire missiles have also been considered for use against Chinese mobile missile launchers.

A senior STRATCOM official said that up to 30 percent of the targets in the plan could potentially be covered by conventional weapons in the future, although that would require development of additional conventional strategic weapons.

Plan production is an elaborate process that involves target identification and analysis, calculation of sortie probability of arrival, aimpoint (Desired Ground Zero) construction, weapons allocation to individual sorties, calculation of probably of damage, and plans distribution. From this process emerges a requirement for a certain number and type of warheads that is inflated by additional requirements for reserve weapons and replacement weapons.

Target Categories

The strike plans against the six adversaries are directed against four overall categories of targets drawn from the National Target Base, an elaborate database containing profiles of thousands of WMD facilities worldwide. The four target categories are: military forces, WMD infrastructure, military and national leadership, and war supporting infrastructure. Larger strike options tend to consist of preplanned targeting plans while adaptively planned crisis options draw targets from these preplanned plans. Adaptive planning – initially designed to better target mobile missiles and create a “Living SIOP” capable of responding to frequent changes in threats and guidance – is thought to be an important planning feature of OPLAN 8010. The four target categories indicate that although threat perceptions, warhead numbers, and war planning capabilities have changed significantly since the Cold War, the basic objective of nuclear targeting is strikingly similar (see Table 5).

**Table 5:
Nuclear Target Categories 1976 and 2009**

<u>SIOP-5 (1976)</u>	<u>OPLAN 8010 (2009)</u>
Nuclear forces and storage locations	Military forces
Conventional forces	WMD infrastructure
Leadership and Command and Control	Military and national leadership
Economic and industrial facilities	War supporting infrastructure
While threats and force levels have changed significantly since the Cold War, the overall categories of targets that nuclear planners are required to plan against are very similar. One retired senior Air Force official recently said that one of these target categories could be dropped but declined to which one.	

One reason such broad Cold War-like target categories still exist in the strategic war plan is that the declaratory policy and guidance the war planners follow is very broad. After the doctrine was broadened in the 1990s from deterring *nuclear* to deterring all forms of *weapons of mass destruction*, and 9/11 and the “Axis of Evil” doctrine triggered incorporation of executable strike options against regional states into the strategic war plan, the declaratory policy stated in 2008 appears to reach even further to “friends” and non-state actors:

The United States “has made it clear for many years that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force to the use of *weapons of mass destruction*

against the United States, our people, our forces and our friends and allies. *Additionally*, the United States will hold any state, *terrorist group*, or other non-state actor fully accountable for supporting or enabling terrorist efforts to obtain or use weapons of mass destruction, whether by facilitating, financing, or providing expertise or safe haven for such efforts."⁹ (Emphasis added).

"Weapons of mass destruction" is a much broader target category than "nuclear," "friends and allies" is a broader category than "allies," and "any state, terrorist group, or other non-state actor" is a broader category than "nuclear armed state."

The Obama administration's first Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), in comparison, includes a broad declaratory statement on nuclear forces intended to "deter attack on the United States, and on our allies and partners."¹⁰ The term "partners" seems broader than "allies" but narrower than "friends."

So, although the Clinton administration removed requirements to plans for a protracted nuclear war against Russia and the Bush administration removed Russia as an "immediate contingency" for U.S. nuclear planning and both administrations promised to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, the guidance simultaneously asked the war planners to create more options against more target in more areas.

This, ironically, has created a more complex strategic war plan that is required to be able to do more with less. As arms control agreements, unilateral initiatives, and budgetary constraints significantly reduced the number of warheads and delivery vehicles available to hold potentially targets at risk, planners were asked to include more target categories in more countries in more strike options.

The Name Game

The name of OPLAN 8010 – *Strategic Deterrence and Global Strike* – is interesting because it suggests a plan with two missions: "Strategic Deterrence" and "Global Strike." Or, which is perhaps more accurate, it expresses two ends of the planning spectrum. STRATCOM Public Affairs officially refused to elaborate on the meaning of the name, but senior STRATCOM officials privately explained that the nuances are more than academic.

Super I "Strategic deterrence" normally refers to the traditional role of the strategic war plan to deter nuclear attacks on the United States and its allies. STRATCOM describes strategic deterrence as its "first line of operation...that includes nuclear force operations. That's the old SAC, translated to STRATCOM back in the '90s, translated to today."¹¹ Yet "deterrence" is an elastic concept and the "old" planning also included strikes at global range, so the question is how Global Strike today is different?

The answer to that question is apparent in the evolution of the Global Strike mission since it was first assigned to STRATCOM in January 2003. Back then the Global Strike mission was described as a unique quick-strike – even preemptive – mission intended to provide capabilities for scenarios that were not covered by the strategic war plan (at the time known as OPLAN 8044): "a capability to deliver rapid, extended range, precision kinetic (nuclear and conventional) and non-kinetic (elements of space and information operations) effects in support of theater and national objectives."¹² A separate Global Strike war plan (CONPLAN

8022) was created that included both conventional and nuclear options to destroy WMD forces before they could be used. Yet the Joint Functional Component Command Space and Global Strike (JFCC SGS) that STRATCOM set up to plan and execute Global Strike also inherited responsibility for the strategic war plan.¹³

Up until that point STRATCOM had described strategic deterrence and Global Strike as separate, but after CONPLAN 8022 was canceled in late 2004, STRATCOM started describing Global Strike as synonymous with the offensive leg of the “New Triad,” consisting of nuclear, conventional, and non-kinetic offensive capabilities. JFCC Space and Global Strike was renamed JFCC Global Strike and Integration to describe the integration of Global Strike options into the strategic war plan and regional plans. Defense officials told me Global Strike was “migrating” from CONPLAN 8022 into the other plans as needed. Today the STRATCOM component command that has responsibility for maintenance and execution of the strategic war plan is simply known as JFCC Global Strike; deterrence and WMD preemption have merged (see Table 6).

**Table 6:
Strategic War Plan Name Evolution**

2002: Last SIOP.
2003: Global Strike mission established.
2003: SIOP changed to OPLAN 8044 Revision 03 (no name) with strike options against regional states. Transition plan to “New Triad”.
2004: CONPLAN 8022 Global Strike <u>preemptive war</u> plan temporarily enters into effect.
2004: CONPLAN 8022 is withdrawn.
2005: Nuclear and Global Strike listed as separate in Strategic Deterrence JOC V.1.
2005: JFCC <i>Space and Global Strike</i> becomes operational.
2006: JFCC <i>Global Strike and Integration</i> name change and separation from Space.
2006: Global Strike synonymous with offensive leg of New Triad in SD JOC V.2.
2008: JFCC <i>Global Strike</i> name change.
2008: OPLAN 8010-08 <i>Global Deterrence and Strike</i> name change.
2008: OPLAN 8010-08 <i>Strategic Deterrence and Global Strike</i> name change. Change 1 made to OPLAN 8010-08 on February 1, 2009, was still in effect on February 1, 2010.
The names and relationship of nuclear deterrence and Global Strike have changed repeatedly since 2002 to reflect new guidance and intensions. Today they have merged into one plan.

The public debate tends to discuss Global Strike as if it is conventional and synonymous with Prompt Global Strike. But Prompt Global Strike is a conventional subset of Global Strike, according to a former senior STRATCOM official, which includes the full range of offensive capabilities including nuclear weapons. Confusing the debate even more is that the military itself frequently uses Global Strike interchangeably whether referring to nuclear or conventional operations and whether prompt or slow: strategic nuclear forces are called Global Strike weapons; the Air Force’s new nuclear/conventional command is called Global Strike Command; the forward deployment of B-2 and B-52 bombers to Guam is described as Global Strike operations; four former Trident submarine converted to non-nuclear missions are described as Global Strike assets; and deployment of non-nuclear F-22 fighters into the Pacific

is said to be a Global Strike mission.

This merger of “deterrence” and Global Strike reflects an effort to create a seamless web of strategic effects with global reach and “tailor deterrence to fit particular actors, situations, and forms of warfare,” as the National Defense Strategy expresses it.¹⁴ The options range from limited strikes against emerging, high-payoff targets deep inside a country, requiring quick response, critical defeat, or counter WMD, responding rapidly after target identification to deliver effects within a short window of vulnerability. These limited quick strikes can also be used to “kick down the door” in the opening phases of a larger attack. Although “tailored deterrence” capabilities are mainly described as intended for use against non-state actors and proliferating nations, they can of course also be used to improve the effectiveness of strike scenarios against Russia and China.

Whereas “strategic deterrence” is as old as the nuclear age itself and intended to prevent war, Global Strike is a new phenomenon that arose from the counterproliferation mission of the 1990s and was coined as a preemptive strategy focused on destroying WMD targets before they can be used. The Counterproliferation Operational Architecture developed by STRATCOM less than a year before it was formally assigned the Global Strike mission in January 2003, summed up counterproliferation this way: “Every NBC weapon (WMD) that is destroyed before it is used...is one less we must intercept... or absorb...and mitigate.” The strike options that were developed focused on destroying WMD “before they can be used,” and the document bluntly projected this counterproliferation principle to counterforce planning in general: “Counterforce is preemptive, or offensively reactive.” In the regional counter-WMD scenarios where U.S. national survival was not at risk, counterforce was focused bluntly on target destruction rather than deterrence.¹⁵

Figure 7:
Strategic Deterrence or Global Strike



Strategic nuclear deterrence and Global Strike have evolved from separate missions to part of the same strategic war plan: OPLAN 8010.

This preemptive counterproliferation vision reflected the Bush administration’s National Security Strategy from September 2002 and National Strategy to Combat Weapons Destruction from December 2002, its decision to go to war against Iraq, and its decision to incorporate executable strategic strike options against regional states armed with WMD into the strategic war plan (OPLAN 8044 Revision 03).

The merger of the highly offensive Global Strike mission with strategic deterrence has colored the overall strategic posture. In the eye of potential adversaries it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between retaliation (deterrence) and preemption (Global Strike). This ambiguity has not evolved accidentally but to create uncertainty in an adversary's mind about a U.S. response. In some situations that might strengthen deterrence – in others it might undermine it and trigger military counter-planning or even the very escalation it was intended to prevent.

Options for Limiting the Nuclear Role

President Obama's Prague speech in April 2009 was visionary but vague. "To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy."¹⁶ In early 2010 he added that, "our Nuclear Posture Review will reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy."¹⁷

But how can the administration reduce the role of nuclear weapons in ways that not only changes public policy but also changes the strategic war plan itself? After all, the capabilities – more than the policy – are what other nuclear weapon states are looking at to determine their own nuclear planning. There are fortunately many possibilities:

Limiting the nuclear mission to deterring nuclear attack. This would remove a requirement for nuclear planning against chemical and biological attacks. It would remove half of the six adversaries from the war plan: Iran, Syria, and non-state actors; none of whom are known to possess nuclear weapons. Planning against chemical and biological weapons evolved during the Clinton administration and triggered broader nuclear planning against more adversaries during the Bush administration.¹⁸

Nasty as they may be, however, chemical attacks may not be severe enough to justify nuclear use, and the effects of biological attacks are delayed and may be hard to attribute to a particular adversary fast enough to justify nuclear retaliation. Neither is likely to threaten the survival of the United States nor its allies. Overwhelming conventional capabilities are probably sufficient to deter such use (to the extent anything can). Eliminating this mission would have the added benefit of removing the contradiction with the Negative Security Assurances not to target non-nuclear NPT countries.

SU -
are SW
after SU
are
attitude?

Even so, the merger of nuclear and conventional options in OPLAN 8010 could make it harder to visualize this change because the plan contains strategic conventional strike options against the same adversaries, and because bombers have both nuclear and conventional capabilities. It would be tragic if this mix made it impossible for the United States to reorganize its posture to clearly demonstrate that a change has indeed taken place.

Limit the nuclear mission to Russia and China. The 2010 QDR describes the development of a "new, tailored, regional deterrence architecture that combine our forward presence, relevant conventional capabilities (including missile defenses), and continued commitment to extend our nuclear deterrent" that combined "make possible a reduced role for nuclear weapons in our national security strategy."¹⁹ This might refer to a reduction in the role of nuclear weapons in regional scenarios against adversaries other than Russian and China, and/or a withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Europe. Focusing the nuclear mission against large

nuclear adversaries that actually have the capability to threaten the survival of the United States and its allies would remove four of the six adversaries from the war plan.

Limit or remove damage limitation scenarios: This classic Cold War mission seeks to limit the damage and adversary's WMD forces can inflict on the United States and its allies by destroying the forces before they can be used. Although less massive now than during the Cold War, the mission gained new life with the Bush administration's Global Strike mission of preemptive attacks against WMD targets in regional "states of concern." The mission contributes to a requirement to keep nuclear forces at a high level of readiness, which drives worst-case scenario planning, requirements for highly dynamic nuclear force postures, and creates insecurity. Proponents of a high readiness level argue that such a posture is preferable to de-alerting because an adversary observing nuclear forces being returned to alert in a crisis might decide to strike first. But this worst-case scenario glosses over the fact that current nuclear planning already includes options for raising alert level and dispersing forces in a crisis. Indeed, the entire Responsive Force of thousands of non-deployed reserve warheads was created explicitly, as stated in the 2001 NPR, to provide the option to "increase the number of operationally deployed forces in proportion to the severity of an evolving crisis."²⁰ Removing the requirement to plan for damage limitation options would reduce fear of first strikes and essentially create a No-First-Use policy but without publicly committing to one.

Limit target categories: One or more of the target categories for nuclear planning can probably be dropped. Nuclear planning in the 21st century will not be about winning nuclear wars by depleting warfighting assets but about ensuring sufficient retaliatory capability to deter nuclear attack in the first place. In the case of the United States, that capability will not be threatened by anything else but nuclear forces.

Limit and eventually abandon nuclear counterforce strategy: The use of nuclear forces to hold at risk other nuclear forces is a Cold War strategy intended to win nuclear wars. This highly offensive and threatening strategy is both inappropriate and counterproductive in the post-Cold War era because it drives highly responsive nuclear postures on both sides that are incompatible with a transition to deep cuts and eventual elimination. Nuclear counterforce with force-on-force war planning should transition to a much more relaxed yet secure retaliatory deterrence capability.²¹

Limit or end nuclear and conventional integration: This effort would halt and reverse the New Triad's seamless extension of nuclear weapons as being just another tool in the toolbox alongside conventional and non-kinetic offensive capabilities. While this construct was intended to make deterrence more credible in the post-Cold War world, mixing nuclear and conventional actually makes it harder to communicate intent and consequences to potential adversaries because they cannot be certain if they're being threatened with nuclear or conventional forces. This ambiguity makes it harder to control a crisis and avoid misunderstandings. Nuclear is clearly in a category by itself and both policy and planning should reflect that. Interestingly, in her recent speech to the Second Annual Deterrence Summit, U.S. undersecretary of arms control and international security Ellen Tauscher seemed to acknowledge the problem of nuclear and conventional force integration: "A nuclear weapon, no matter what its yield, is still a nuclear weapon. The firewall between nuclear and conventional weapons must remain bold, not blurred."²²

Clarify the scope of the Global Strike mission. The use of "Global Strike" seems to be proliferating faster than WMD these days. While it used to describe an explicit mission separate from the strategic war plan to provide capabilities that were not in it, Global Strike now seems to incorporate essentially any strategic effect with global range. Nuclear and non-nuclear commands and forces all describe themselves as part of Global Strike. The public debate is confused about where conventional ends and nuclear begins. If the debate in the United States cannot tell the difference, neither will potential adversaries be able to. Limiting and clarifying the Global Strike mission and its relationship with the strategic war plan would make signaling clearer and help avoid triggering Russian and Chinese strategic counter-planning.

Conclusions

The Obama administration has a unique opportunity to reshape the U.S. strategic war plan by agreeing to lower force levels through a START Follow-On treaty with Russia and by issuing new guidance to military planners through the Nuclear Posture Review.

OPLAN 8010 is the product of strategic targeting and war planning principles developed during the Cold War, the Clinton administration's expansion of nuclear doctrine, and the Bush administration's preemption and "New Triad" vision. As such it may not be compatible with a pledge to put an end to Cold War thinking and reducing the role of nuclear weapons.

If anyone at the end of the Cold War had suggested that the strategic war plan 20 years later would include *more* options for a *wider* range of contingencies against *more* adversaries than the Cold War SIOP, they would have been dismissed as completely unrealistic. Yet that is how the plan has evolved.

The conflicting trends of arms control and unilateral cuts reducing warheads and delivery platforms on the one hand, and White House guidance requiring "more flexible options" for "a wider range of contingencies" on the other, have created a serious challenge for the war planners who are expected to do more with less. As a result, the war plan has grown increasingly complex and planners have started to "groom weapons to optimize performance" to cover all the required missions. This development is probably unsustainable unless the Obama administration's Nuclear Posture Review reduces the requirements for what the military has to plan for.

Reshaping the plan must recognize that added security does not simply come from piling on superior capabilities and more strike options but by balancing sufficient secure retaliatory capabilities with other important national security and foreign policy objectives. The old mantra that one cannot limit the president's options is not only incorrect as demonstrated by many existing limitations, but also incompatible with the president's own pledge to put an end to Cold War thinking and limit the role of nuclear weapons.

An important challenge arising from limiting the nuclear mission to deter only nuclear weapons will be to avoid that it leads to an invigoration of conventional counterforce planning to hold nuclear targets at risk, and thereby deepen insecurity in other nuclear weapon states that trigger counter-modernizations that is not in the U.S. long-term interest. In a nuclear

policy that seeks to facilitate progress towards elimination, defining what constitute a *sufficient* deterrent will be more relevant than defining what constitutes a *credible* deterrent.

Yet even if the Nuclear Posture Review eliminates the requirement to plan strikes against chemical and biological forces and reduces the mission to only deterring nuclear attacks, that would ironically *not* put an end to Cold War thinking; it would put an end to post-Cold War thinking. It would essentially reverse U.S. nuclear policy to its core mission against Russia and China, albeit at much lower levels than during the Cold War.

If the Obama administration truly wants to put an end to Cold War thinking, then the Nuclear Posture Review will have to reduce the role U.S. nuclear weapons serve against Russia and China. That role is what overwhelmingly dominates U.S. nuclear planning today, force levels, and weapons requirements, and it must be changed to facilitate a transition to deep cuts and eventually elimination of nuclear weapons.

About the Author



Hans M. Kristensen is director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists. He is co-author of the Nuclear Notebook in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and the World Nuclear Forces tables in the SIPRI Yearbook, two of the worlds most widely used sources on the status and trends in nuclear weapons.

¹ Statement of President Barack Obama, Global Zero Summit, Paris, France, February 2-4, 2010, URL <http://globalzero.org/en/opening-day-statement-global-zero-leaders>

President Obama's statement was echoed by Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Ellen Tauscher, who said at the Global Zero Summit that the NPR "will reduce role and number of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy." See: Global Zero Summit, Ellen Tauscher, U.S. Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, Paris, France, February 3m 2010, URL <http://www.state.gov/t/us/136425.htm>

² U.S. Strategic Command, *Commander U.S. Strategic Command End of Tour Interview for Admiral James O. Ellis, Jr.*, June 18, 2004 (last updated January 17, 2006), p. 5. Released under FOIA.

³ General Kevin Chilton, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, *Statement Before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, House Committee on Armed Services, on the United States Strategic Command*, March 17, 2009, pp. 3, 8.

⁴ Richard Boucher, U.S. Department of State, daily press briefing, February 22, 2002. The transcript is no longer available on the State Department web site, but is described in Philipp C. Bleek, "Bush Administration Reaffirms Negative Security Assurances," *Arms Control Today*, March 2002, <http://www.armscontrol.org/print/1010>.

The 2002 statement is almost identical to the earlier statement made in April 1995 by then Secretary of State Warren Christopher: "The United States reaffirms that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons except in the case of an invasion or any other attack on the United States, its territories, its armed forces or other troops, its allies, or on a State towards which it has a security commitment, carried out or sustained by such a non-nuclear-weapon State in association or alliance with a nuclear-weapon state." U.S. Department of State, *Statement by the Honorable Warren Christopher, Secretary of State, Regarding a Declaration by the President on Security Assurances for Non-Nuclear Weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, April 5, 1995.

⁵ The White House, Press Briefing by Robert Bell, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control, National Security Council, April 11, 1996.

⁶ Richard Boucher, U.S. Department of State, daily press briefing, February 22, 2002. The transcript is no longer available on the State Department web site, but is described in Philipp C. Bleek, "Bush Administration Reaffirms Negative Security Assurances," *Arms Control Today*, March 2002, <http://www.armscontrol.org/print/1010>.

⁷ Hans M. Kristensen, "White House Guidance Led to New Nuclear Strike Plans Against Proliferators, Document Shows," *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, November 5, 2007, http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2007/11/white_house_guidance_led_to_ne.php

⁸ Some STRATCOM officials insist that the actual number of operationally deployed strategic warheads is greater than the "OSD sanctioned" number.

⁹ The White House, *Remarks by the National Security Advisor, Stephen Hadley, to the Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University*, February 8, 2008, p. 5.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 2010, p. 14, http://www.defense.gov/qdr/images/QDR_as_of_12Feb10_1000.pdf

¹¹ Vice Admiral Carl V. Mauney, Deputy Commander, USSTRATCOM, Speech to the Space and Missile Defense Symposium, Huntsville, Alabama, August 13, 2008, http://www.stratcom.mil/speeches/18/Space_and_Missile_Defense_Symposium

¹² U.S. Department of Defense, *Unified Command Plan, Change 2*, January 10, 2003.

¹³ For a description of the Global Strike mission, see: Hans M. Kristensen, *Global Strike: A Chronology of the Pentagon's New Offensive Strike Plan*, Federation of American Scientists, March 15, 2006, <http://www.nukestrat.com/us/stratcom/GSchron.htm>

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, p. 12.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterproliferation Operational Architecture*, Prepared by USSTRATCOM and USSOCOM, April 26, 2002, pp. 3, 6, 9. Partially declassified and released under FOIA.

¹⁶ The White House, *Remarks by President Barack Obama, Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic*, April 5, 2009.

¹⁷ *Statement of President Barack Obama, Global Zero Summit, Paris, France*, globalzero.org, February 2, 2010.

¹⁸ For descriptions of the evolution of U.S. nuclear doctrine since the Cold War, see: Hans M. Kristensen, "Targets of Opportunity," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September/October 1997, pp. 22-28; Hans M. Kristensen, "U.S. Nuclear Strategy Reform in the 1990s," Nautilus Institute, March 2000; Hans M. Kristensen, "The Matrix of Deterrence," Nautilus Institute, May 2001; Hans M. Kristensen, "New Doctrine Falls Short of Bush Pledge," *Arms Control Today*, September 2005; Hans M. Kristensen, "Counter-Proliferation and U.S. Nuclear Strategy," in David S. McDonough (ed.), *US Nuclear Strategy and the Implications for Global Security* (Dalhousie University: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2009), pp. 13-34. All available at <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/Publications.html>

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 2010, p. 14.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, December 31, 2001, p. 17.

²¹ For an analysis of ending nuclear counterforce planning, see: Hans M. Kristensen, Ivan Oelrich, and Matthew McKinzie, *From Counterforce to Minimal Deterrence: A New Nuclear Policy on the Path Toward Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*, Federation of American Scientists and Natural Resources Defense Council, April 8, 2009, <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/doctrine/targeting.pdf>

²² Ellen Tauscher, remarks to the Second Annual Deterrence Summit, February 17, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/t/us/136797.htm>